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S. R. REGISTRY
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Date

SHANGHAI EVENING POST & MERCURY.

FEB 14 1939

French Deny War Aces Sent China

Japanese Report On 49
Pilots Declared
"Groundless"

(Havas)

PARIS, Feb. 13. — "Entirely groundless" is the report emanating from a Japanese source and announcing that 49 French airmen, divided into three groups, have gone or are going to China to assist the Chinese Government in the hostilities, official quarters here declared today.

The Japanese report in question alleged that Dr. Wellington Koo, Chinese Ambassador to France, had persuaded French fliers to "help in the reconstruction of Chinese air forces."

An advance group of 18 men led by Lt.-Col. Laurent, World War ace and adviser to the Schneider Corporation, had assertedly left Marseilles late last year and were stated to be in active service now.

A second party of 16 men had allegedly departed from France in the middle of last month, while a third group of 15 airmen is to sail from Marseilles this coming Friday, the report added.

The Japanese despatch concluded in stating, "The French fliers reportedly have been recruited by M. Pierre Cot, former French Air Minister."

"By this move, further indications of French assistance to the National Government, in an effort to counteract Japanese gains in China, was seen by observers."

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FEB 13 1939

French Airmen Joining China New Air Force

(Domei)

TOKYO, Feb. 13.—Forty-five French fliers have been persuaded by Dr. Wellington Koo, Chinese Ambassador to France, to help the reconstruction of Chinese Air forces, according to information received here today.

An advance party of 18, headed by Lieut.-Col. Laurent, former World War ace, and at present adviser to the Schneider Corporation, sailed from Marseilles late last year and are now working in the front lines, the reports stated.

A second group of 16, which left Marseilles about the middle of January has just reached China, while a third group of 15 is scheduled to sail from Marseilles this Friday for China, according to the reports.

The French fliers reportedly have been recruited by M. Pierre Cot, former French Air Minister.

By this move, further indication of French assistance to the Kuomintang regime in an effort to counteract Japanese gains in China, was seen by observers.

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FEB 13 1939

Foreigners to Fly For Chinese in South

More than 80 foreign aviators arrived in Yunnan and Kwangsi recently by way of Hongkong to join the Chinese air force, a Hongkong dispatch reaching here yesterday said.

Most of these foreign aviators are of U.S. and Soviet nationalities, the report said. With the exception of a few who will serve as aviation instructors, the aviators will be employed by the Chinese to fly combat planes, the despatch stated.

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CONFIDENTIAL
SHANGHAI MUNICIPAL POLICE

REPORT

File No. _____
S. 1, Special Branch
No. S. B. D. _____
Date _____ 1939

Subject: Chinese Air Force - Foreign recruits report published in the--
Shanghai Evening News & Mercury dated January 13, 1939.
Made by: J. S. Lockwood. Forwarded by: C. Glavard J. S.

With reference to the report published by the Shanghai Evening News & Mercury on January 13, 1939 regarding the enlistment of foreign personnel in the Chinese Air Force, enquiries from reliable sources show that a similar rumour has been prevalent in local circles for the past few weeks, but official confirmation is lacking.

The Chinese Air Force continues to receive supplies and equipment from the Soviet. All aircrafts, thus supplied, are piloted and serviced by Soviet personnel. The larger percentage of the Chinese Air Force is said to be under the control of Soviet advisors to the Chinese Government. Machines manufactured in Great Britain and the U. S. A. are also used, but, as far as it can be ascertained, the pilots are of Chinese nationality. The maintenance and repair of aircraft is performed by Chinese mechanics working under the supervision of foreign foremen.

J. S. Lockwood.
D. S.

FILE
312
P. A. 120 (S. B. C. (Special Branch)).

JAN 13 1939

500 Foreigners Claimed Joining China Air Force

Aces Reach Chungking
To Form New Unit
Against Japan

GROUP INCLUDES
300 SOVIET VETS

New Zealanders Arrive
From Spanish Front
For Service

Five hundred foreign aviators, many of them veterans of aerial combats and bombing operations, have joined the new Chinese air force, according to reports in circulation at Hongkong. Many other volunteers have applied to join the air force and Mr. Quo Tai-chi, Ambassador at London, and Dr. V. K. Wellington Koo, Ambassador at Paris, are said to be considering their applications.

Three hundred of the foreign volunteers for the Chinese air force are said to be Soviet Russians while the rest are mostly British and French. Several American, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand pilots have also joined. Two of the New Zealanders, the reports continued, have only recently left the Spanish war scene. They have left for Chungking after a brief stay in Hongkong. One of them has a record of four planes shot down while fighting for the Spanish Republicans, it is said.

Separate Branch

The volunteers, it is believed, will fly a separate branch of the new Chinese air force, cooperating with the Chinese fliers, the ranks of which have been materially increased during the last few months. Many of them have been graduated from the Central Aviation Academy in Yunnan and they will join the Chinese veterans who have survived the 18 months of hostilities.

This will mark the second time since the outbreak of Sino-Japa-

nese hostilities that China has engaged large forces of foreign volunteers for aerial combats. Earlier last year, a formidable force of American and other foreign aviators under Colonel Vincent Schmidt combatted the Japanese aviators in numerous battles, including the historic combat over Hankow when a big Japanese squadron was practically wiped out. Colonel Schmidt is also believed to have headed the Chinese squadron which raided the Japanese base at Formosa. They quit following a dispute over the remuneration.

Chinese Planes Resume

Chinese warplanes have resumed activities recently in South China after a prolonged recess. It is reported that they again bombed Japanese naval concentrations at Bocca Tigris in Pearl River and distributed handbills at Tunghun and Sheklung on the Canton-Kowloon Railway asking the Chinese civilians to evacuate the city in view of the general offensive which the Chinese troops are launching.

Meanwhile efforts have been redoubled to equip the growing Chinese air force with a sufficient supply of fast aircraft. Negotiations are said to be going on in America for the purchase of 200 Bellanca bombers fitted to carry seven bombs each. A large quantity of Soviet pursuit planes is understood to be at the disposal of the Chinese government.

D. S. Lockwood
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SHANGHAI TIMES.

JAN 14 1939

Ex-Loyalist Ace In China To Join Air Force

Some men are perfect gluttons for punishment, as some one or other remarked some time ago. They are exemplified by a New Zealand aviator who has just arrived in Hongkong and who is now trying to join the Chinese air force: he comes from Spain via Australia, with a record of about eight months with the Loyalist air force over Madrid. With him comes another New Zealander, also an aviator, who is hoping to earn his living here as well.

The two men are E. N. Griffiths and L. A. Willicombe. Mr. Griffiths is the gentleman from Spain and in his right shoulder is the mark of a Spanish Insurgent bullet, a souvenir of an aerial "dog fight."

Mr. Griffiths arrived in Spain about a fortnight after the war started and enlisted with a fighter unit at Madrid. For the next eight months, he was kept busy in the air, fighting off bombers and pursuit ships alike. He was officially

credited with having brought down four rebel planes.

In a "dog-fight" one day a bullet wounded him severely in the shoulder, he retained control of the machine, however, and brought it safely back to the aerodrome. Subsequently, a convalescent, he went to New Zealand, on to America, back to New Zealand again, and now he is in China, anxious to be in the air once more.

Mr. Willicombe, who arrived in Hongkong with Mr. Griffiths in the s.s. Taiping on January 6, has not had any experience of the "real thing" as regards fighting in the air. He has, however, a good record in the New Zealand Air Force, where one of his specialities was "aerobatics." After leaving the New Zealand Air Force he, too, decided that a "ground job" was no place for him and so he joined Mr. Griffiths in the trip to China in an attempt to earn his living by his trade.

File
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"Foreign Legion" Head Of Fliers Tells Reason For Aiding China Army

Veteran Of Five Wars Leads Daredevil Raid Parties On Japanese Positions In China; Air Arm Said Seeing Unusual Activity

(United Press)

HANKOW, Feb. 25.—Veteran of five wars and with four months service with the Chinese Air Force behind him, Vincent Schmidt, American ace and chief of the Chinese Air Force "Foreign Legion", told the United Press here today that he had joined the Chinese Air Force "because only our weaker brothers need help—it is nonsense to help the strong."

Schmidt, who is credited with having led the spectacular Chinese air raid on Formosa last Wednesday, began combat flying with the Chinese Air Force in November, but had fought Japan in the

air before during the Shanghai War of 1932.

Soldier Of Fortune

A bluff, strapping American, Schmidt has also seen service in the Great War, the Mexican Revolution, the Italo-Ethiopian War and the Spanish civil war.

He won the rank of "Bomber Chief" with the Nationalist forces in Spain and came to China last October as one of forty American and European volunteers to the Chinese Air Force. At present he heads all foreign volunteers in the Chinese Air Force with the exception of Russians and carries the title of "Commander of the 14th Squadron" which consists of American and European volunteers.

Schmidt, 40 years of age, 6 feet tall and weighing 220 pounds, is cheerful but uncommunicative regarding his activities with the Chinese Air Force since he has been instructed to maintain strict secrecy regarding operations of the air arm of China's fighting forces.

Cannot Tell

"I know, but I cannot tell," is his usual answer to friends who question him regarding raids planned or already completed by China's air squadrons. The self-styled "professional bomber," it is worthy of note, came under suspicion of being a foreign spy shortly after his arrival in Nanking last October when he was seen associating with a French woman believed to have been engaged in espionage activities. Central Government authorities were said to have warned the American ace, resulting in his dropping of his French female friend.

Regarding the Chinese raid on Formosa and the possibility of expanded operations by the Chinese Air Force, including rumors of a planned raid on Japan proper, Schmidt today maintained his customary silence.

Noon Raids Disliked

Schmidt resides in the same building in which the United Press office is located here and eats at the Navy Y.M.C.A. He has an intense dislike for Japanese air raids at noon-time which force him to desert his tiffin for the cockpit of a Chinese pursuit plane. He says the past four weeks have been the busiest of his life be-

cause of frequent Chinese raids on Japanese positions along the Hwai River on the southern Tsinpu Railway and other raids on Nanking and Wuhu.

The American volunteer usually arises at 5 o'clock in the morning, not returning until dusk except for tiffin at the Navy Y.M.C.A. Each night he returns tired, apparently after a long flight to bomb some Japanese objective.

Narrow Escape

Schmidt's most recent narrow escape was during a Chinese raid on Pengpu where the Japanese were understood to have had no anti-aircraft batteries. Schmidt dove down on the Japanese positions to drop his bombs, but suddenly found himself in the midst of a hail of tracer anti-aircraft bullets, three of which punctured his plane. Suddenly pulling out of the dive, Schmidt succeeded in escaping without being wounded.

Schmidt, unlike most foreign volunteers here, leads a quiet life, spending most of his evenings studying war maps of the next day's objectives.

He is well aware of the American law against volunteering in foreign wars, but thus far has not been warned by American authorities here who say "Officially we do not know of Schmidt's presence in Hankow." Schmidt regards Mr. Nelson T. Johnson, American Ambassador to China, as an old friend and has told his friends that he regrets not being able to call on Mr. Johnson because of the possible legal complications.

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The Aerial Foreign Legion Passes

DEMOBILIZATION of China's "foreign legion" of the air force has been announced from Hankow, but the announcement tells only half the story.

The group which is being demobilized, or rather reorganized, comprises only the 14th Bombardment Squadron of eight foreign pilots not including any Russians. The Soviet pilots, numbering not less than 40 and with their numbers increasing, will continue as a separate force although this fact is not stated in the announcement.

There are good men in the small foreign group of Americans, French, British, Australian and Canadian nationalities under leadership of Vincent Schmidt, veteran of Spain campaigns, now reported dismissed. But there has also been plenty of trouble—three Americans, picked by Chinese in the United States, having proved never to have been in an airplane before and to have faked their qualifications in order to get a free ride to China. For some time it has been clear that the Chinese air force would have to specialize either more or less in this matter of foreign pilots not of Soviet Russian nationality, and a variety of reasons made it appear advisable to let the dwindling group disintegrate completely. Now the remaining eight will go to other squadrons or to service as instructors.

The official statement announcing this action says that the "foreign legion" participated in aerial engagements with Japanese aircraft at Nanchang and Hankow and also in the bombing of Japanese positions on the Tientsin-Pukow railway front. Probably most of the publicity given these men has been overdrawn but it is certain that they have afforded valuable service to the Chinese cause and will prove of further assistance under the reorganization plan.

As to the Russians, they remain a very mysterious group—taciturn, and operating under strict orders not to let anyone inspect their planes while on the ground or learn much about them. At the beginning they seemed no great bargain at any price. There were many field crashes in landing their fast planes on rough terrain of inadequate dimensions, and their behaviour on raids was as mysterious as everything else about them. Talk persists that they caused the loss of a considerable number of other planes by calmly flying off while they were at a commanding altitude in a crucial moment. It is also persistently rumored that the National Government's control over these pilots is little more than nominal and that they fly if, when and where they choose; yet on the other hand high Government leaders assert their fundamental control over the Soviet pilots, and certainly it is Hankow which is paying their salaries.

The question of material supply certainly must figure largely in the general problem of China's military aircraft and personnel. No one else is giving as favorable terms for plane purchase as is the U.S.S.R. Ten-year credits are said to have been accorded. The pilots more or less go with the planes, it would appear. And indications are that both planes and pilots are in general giving satisfaction; meeting the canny Chinese requirement of a good deal for the money, in short.

Twin-engined bombers of high speed (so high as not to require pursuit-plane escort, it is rumored) and reasonably fast, highly maneuverable biplanes are Russia's great contributions in the way of material. The ultra-fast but poorly maneuverable monoplanes did not work out and there will be no more of them sent in. How much the Russians are doing for Chinese pilots in the way of training, or allowing them to fly Russian craft, is problematical. But the Chinese are receiving training in other quarters and they are getting more airplanes. With Dr. T.V. Soong now in a major aeronautic role, there will be better co-ordination and general improvement, including better provision in the way of air fields—long China's great need, and inexcusably neglected in the past.

File
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SECRET

SHANGHAI MUNICIPAL POLICE.

File No.

Special Branch - S.I. Station,

REPORT

Date November 4, 1937.

Subject Arrival in Shanghai of three French aviators seeking employment in the Chinese Air Force.

Made by D.S. Pitts.

Forwarded by

Among the passengers arriving in Shanghai on the Messageries Maritimes s.s. "Felix Roussel" on October 18, 1937 were the following three French aviators who embarked at Marseilles:-

- (1) Martial LAROCHE, aged 35.
- (2) Marcel FLOREIN, aged 23 and
- (3) Alfred PILAIN, aged 41.

All three have seen action as aviators on the Spanish fronts, but whether they were fighting for the Republicans or Nationalists is not known.

LAROCHE and FLOREIN, after arrival here, resided at a boarding house situated at No. 390 Avenue Joffre (Cafe Normandie), but left for Nanking on October 27 in an effort to obtain positions with the Chinese Air Force.

PILAIN, who is accompanied by his wife, is at present residing at Clements Apartments, 1363 Rue Lafayette, and although it is known that he came to Shanghai with the express intention of joining the Chinese Air Force, what moves he has made to secure a post have not yet been learned. According to reliable information PILAIN is an officer on reserve of the French Army.



D.S. Pitts
D. S.

D.C. (Special Branch).

G. 45M-1-26

Special Branch - S.I. Station,

Date...October 28,...1937.

Made by D.S. Pitts.

C. Gould D. S.

It is to be remarked that these three individuals all
harbour very pronounced anti-fascist sentiments. *Ja Pi*

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